

# ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

## DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

### NEWS RELEASE



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Time: 3:00 p.m.

### **SUBDISTRICTS 5 & 6 CHINOOK SALMON FISHERIES CLOSE JULY 11**

Effective 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 11, subsistence salmon fishing with set gillnets for Chinook salmon will close in the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet river drainages and in the marine waters of the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts. Subsistence salmon will immediately reopen in all fresh and marine waters of the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet Subdistricts to subsistence salmon fishing 24 hours a day seven days a week. However, after 6:00 p.m. July 11, set gillnets used in the marine waters must have a mesh size of 6 inches or less and gillnets used in freshwater areas must have a mesh size of 4 ½ inches or less. Also effective 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 11, the sport fishery in the Unalakleet and Shaktoolik River drainages will be closed and the use of bait is prohibited in all fresh waters of the Unalakleet and Shaktoolik River drainages.

Subsistence and sport fishery closures for Chinook salmon will remain in effect until further notice. These management measures are necessary if there is to be any chance of reaching Chinook salmon escapement goals in the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet River drainages. Subsistence fishermen are also reminded that any Chinook salmon incidentally captured in beach seines used to target other salmon must be immediately released back into the water. Similarly, any Chinook salmon incidentally hooked while sport fishing for other species must be released immediately.

As of July 7, only 90 Chinook salmon have been counted at the salmon counting tower on the North River, a tributary of the Unalakleet River and only 20 Chinook salmon have been counted at the Unalakleet River weir. Since 2008, only 9% of the annual North River tower Chinook salmon passage has occurred by July 7 and salmon runs this season are showing the latest timing observed in nearly 30 years. However, assessment data indicate that the projected North River Chinook salmon escapement will still be well short of the lower end of the escapement goal range of 1,200-2,600 Chinook salmon. The Subdistricts 5 and 6 Management Plan directs the department to close all fishing for Chinook salmon if the projected escapement past the North River tower is below the lower end of the escapement goal range. Marine and freshwater subsistence and sport fisheries closures are in accordance with the plan and warranted to reach escapement goals for Chinook salmon in the Shaktoolik and Unalakleet River drainages and protect future returns of Chinook salmon to these drainages.